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EXTRA PRECAUTIONS

end of this sentence). And the parasite's hard outer shell protects it from the chlorine that's used to kill most microbes in water. Drinking-water regulations are designed to reduce—but not necessarily eliminate—*Cryptosporidium*, so even water systems that meet government standards may not be free of the parasite.

What else might your drinking water contain? Everything from pesticides like atrazine to a possibly cancer-causing gasoline additive called MBTE. If that makes you nervous, here are three things you can do:

- try to figure out what's coming out of your faucet (see "What's in Your Tap Water?" p. 4),
- buy a filter (see "Filter This," p. 5), or
- switch to bottled water (see "Hitting the Bottle," p. 6).

¹ *Epidemiology* 8: 615, 1997.

² *J. Epidem. Comm. Health* 54: 45, 2000.

³ *Epidemiology* 9: 126, 1998.

⁴ *Amer. J. Pub. Health* 87: 1168, 1997.

⁵ *Epidemiology* 9: 134, 1998.

COMING CLEAN

Should companies that bottle water offer consumers the same detailed reports of contaminants that public water utilities must? Yes, says the Food and Drug Administration. No, says the bottled-water industry. If you think consumers have the right to know what they're drinking, you can help by signing and mailing this coupon or writing your own letter.

To: Joseph Levitt, Director

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From:

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Consumers have the right to know what's in their bottled water. As a member of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, I support the FDA's proposal that bottled-water manufacturers be required to make available detailed reports of contaminants, just as public water utilities do. All bottled-water labels should also disclose where the water comes from.

■ To minimize your exposure to lead and other

metals: Use only water from the cold-water tap for drinking, cooking, and making baby formula. Hot water is likely to contain more lead and other metals. If the tap hasn't been turned on for six hours or more, run the water until it gets as cold as it's going to get. That helps flush out any metals that may have accumulated.

■ To minimize your exposure to trihalomethanes

and parasites: Boil your drinking water for at least one minute in an open pot, then let it cool down. That will vaporize any trihalomethanes and kill any *Cryptosporidium* or other parasites. If you don't use the water right away, refrigerate it.

■ If you have a severely weakened immune system:

There's not enough evidence to say that you should avoid tap water, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). But if you want to take "extra precautions," the CDC says to boil your tap water for at least a minute in an open pot or filter it with a system that is certified to reduce cysts (*Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia*) under ANSI/NSF Standard 53 (for a list, contact NSF International—see "The Water Works"). You can also drink bottled water that has been distilled or run through a reverse-osmosis filter.

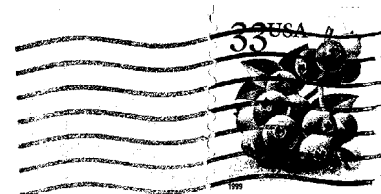
■ If you drink only bottled water:

Your teeth may not be getting enough fluoride, even if you use a fluoridated toothpaste. Tell your dentist, who may prescribe fluoride supplements, especially for children.

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